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POVERTY PAPARAZZI

Young people on 'problem' housing estates up and down England and Wales could be subject to harassment by police camera and video units in the same manner as peace and animal rights protestors, it has been revealed.

The controversial police surveillance techniques, which involve photographing and filming protestors to build profiles of known demonstrators, have been used against suspected anti-social youth in a trial in a housing estate in Essex. It now looks like the rest of the country will see Forward Intelligence Team (FIT) units deployed on 'problem' estates as a means of tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

The news comes as the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has formally complained to the Home Office that its journalists covering demonstrations have been photographed by police while carrying out their work.

The Essex trail, dubbed Operation Leopard, involved closely following and openly filming and photographing young people from the Vange estate in Basildon who were 'known to police' and who had petty criminal records. Small teams of officers were deployed to film 14 individuals, all male and mostly under 18, and anyone associating with them.

This meant filming the youths at close range as they got home from work or were out with friends. Police then kept any

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PROJECTILE FESTIVAL

This issue contains a special feature on Newcastle's Projectile Anarchist Festival. Now in its fourth year, it is becoming something of a monster. Stretching over four days of films and talks that opened with an address from Noam Chomsky (anarchism's only real superstar), it is probably the British movement's most impressive annual event.

Three years ago and the films were projected onto a whitewashed wall in the building site which is now the bar of the Star & Shadow cinema. Since then volunteers have built a top spec venue which runs throughout the year as a low cost volunteer-run venue. This DIY ethos has been maintained throughout the event's history in its sense of community: remarkably, accommodation is provided by local anarchists who volunteer to put up festival-goers in their homes (all *Freedom* correspondents were more than satisfied with their digs).

Because Projectile does not set out to be a conference, it actually leaves space for networking and political development better than the actual conferences – such as London's annual Anarchist Bookfair. Over the last four events, a focus on class and class struggle has naturally emerged, leading to this year's reciprocal subjects of anti-fascism and community organising.

The festival's only failing so far is not to record itself – it might seem odd to film a film festival but, as the selected highlights will show, Projectile has become far more than just a film festival.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

ABORTION: A motion to reduce the time limit on abortion was defeated in the Commons by a comfortable majority of 71. The issue was a free vote and, while the Prime Minister and a majority of the government voted to keep the law at 24 weeks, most Conservative MPs voted in favour of reducing the time a woman can have a termination to 22 weeks. The issue looks set to return should the Tories get back into power.

RAIL: Both the RMT and TSSA unions are to ballot members over strike action this summer. Safety managers at key mainline stations are threatening to walk out later this month because they fear employer Network Rail's restructuring plans will lead to redundancies. Ballot results will be announced mid-June. Action would see stations closed in London, Leeds and Manchester.

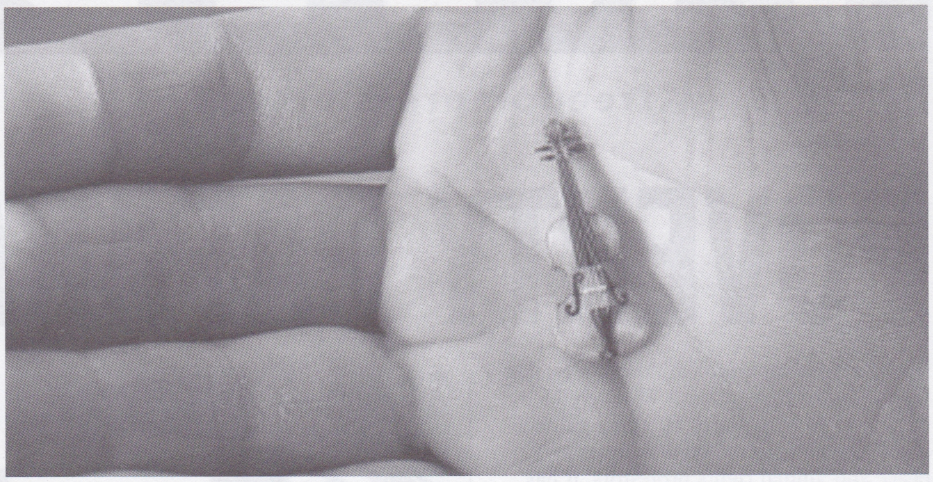
POLICE: Our Boys in Blue have voted overwhelmingly for the right to strike. Almost 90% of Police Federation members backed the move, which has come in the wake of a below-inflation pay dispute with government. Current laws which bar police from striking would however need to be scrapped.

NURSING: The Royal College of Midwives has rejected a sub-inflation three-year pay deal from the government. Under the terms of the offer, midwives would receive an 8% increase spread over three years. More the 99% of members voted against the offer. Ministers hoped this would deflect possible industrial action, but this is now looking unlikely, as members of other health unions are overwhelmingly rejecting similar deals.

MEDIA: Staff at the newly merged Thomson-Reuters corporation are gearing up for possible industrial action after it was revealed that hundreds of jobs could be going. Up to 140 journalist jobs and 700 sales positions, most based in Europe, are for the chop. NUJ members at London's Thomson offices are in favour of strikes because they say the company wants to make redundancies compulsory. Management say that new positions are to be created, but they have so far announced only 20 fresh jobs in 'web video roles'.

ENERGY: A new report details the staggering cost of bringing nuclear power to the UK. The Sellafield complex in Cumbria, which was once thought able to provide electricity too cheap to meter, now costs the Exchequer over £3bn per year. Almost none of the facilities at the site work properly and masses of lethal plutonium waste has been produced. The research, conducted for Friends of the Earth by Oxford academic and former journalist Paul Brown, reveals that details of Sellafield's failures were kept hidden from the public, even as the government is now trying to persuade us that nuclear is the only option to combat climate change.

LENS CAP THE WORLD'S SMALLEST VIOLIN



When reality TV 'star' Jade Goody made vaguely racist comments, the genuinely racist tabloids destroyed their pet creation overnight. The Lord Murdoch giveth, and he taketh away. Some people felt sorry for her. Other people laughed. Some other people just robbed £56,000 worth of trinkets from her Essex home. Police believe she left a window open. Not been a great year!
Jodie Hudson posted directions to her parents £4.5million Spanish villa on the internet, hoping for the 'party of the year'. But things soon turned sour when over 400 revellers from the Costa Del Sol gatecrashed her 16th birthday, stealing £6,000 of jewellery and designer clothes, smashing furniture and even throwing a television into the swimming pool. Her mother rents the villa as a holiday home at £4,000 a week, but fears it will not be repaired in time for the summer season.

Nottingham students arrested

The arrest of two men from Nottingham university on dubious terrorist-related charges has sparked worldwide outrage. One of the pair now faces deportation in a seemingly racially motivated case which shows how terror laws are being used to undermine academic freedom.

Hicham Yezza, an administrator in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, and Rizwaan Sabir, a masters student in the School of Politics and International Relations, were both arrested last month after police were alerted to 'radical' material being handled by both men.

In reality, Sabir had asked Yezza, a friend, to print some documents – specifically, an al-Qaeda training manual – that he had found on a US government department website. The documents were for research purposes into radical Islam for Sabir's course. In a political climate which sees universities as one part of the government's anti-terror weaponry, students and academic staff are increasingly being monitored for 'radical' or 'subversive' material.

On 14th May the pair were arrested but released six days later without charge. However, Yezza was then re-arrested on immigration grounds and charged with offences relating to his immigration status. On Friday 23rd May, the Home Office had informed his solicitor that he was to be flown out of the country on Sunday 1st June. He is now being held in Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre, near Heathrow Airport.

Yezza faces being deported back to Algeria without due process, but his lawyers have won an injunction against the 1st June deportation and are now awaiting a judicial review of the case.

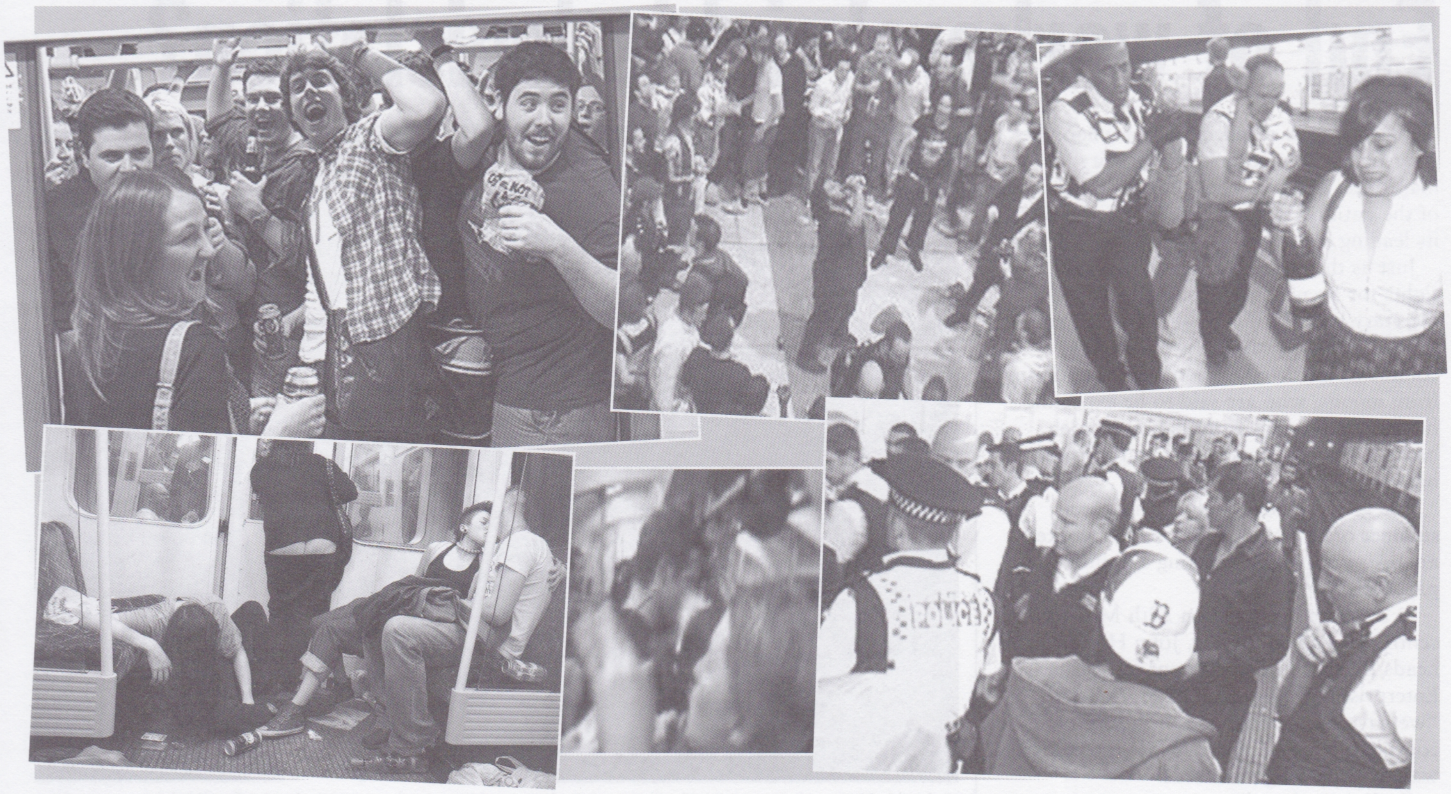
Bettina Rentz, a lecturer in international security and the Sabir's personal tutor, was quoted as saying: "This case is very worrying. The student downloaded publicly accessible information and provoked this very harsh reaction. Nobody tried to speak to him or to his tutors before police were sent in."

Yezza, meanwhile, has vowed to fight on.

THE QUIZ

1. Which 21 year-old socialist translated Kropotkin's *Words of a Rebel* into Italian?
2. Which city has just chosen a deputy mayor convited of benefit fraud, shortly after having a former Mayor jailed for electoral fraud?
3. What is 'end of the world' insurance and why is it unlikely to be cashed in?
4. Why ought we to be worried about carbon nanotubes?

Answers on page 14



Underground party

Unlike the previous anarchist inspired events first organised by the Space Hijackers in solidarity with striking tube workers in 1999, last Saturday's Circle Line Party attracted thousands and was intended to be a relatively apolitical response to the alchohol ban on public transport.

The official story of what happened on the night is that the joke got out of hand, fights broke out and the police had to move in to shut down the party.

There were 17 reported arrests for the event, and Bob Crow estimates "up to fifty" of his RMT members were assaulted one way or another, either verbally or physically. Six stations were closed and several trains had to be taken out of service due to 'damage'. What is not made clear by the news reports is that this damage was often incidences of the crowd tearing down advertising boards.

From watching videos of the event from the mainstream media and those posted by the revelers themselves, there is evidence that nature of the event is being misconstrued. Despite the original apolitical promotion, the attendees were overwhelmingly anti-Boris and, when it came to it, anti-police.

The arrests on the trains seemed to have faced some resistance from the crowd, which could have been factor in the police's choice to close Liverpool Street station and move all party-commuters into the main concourse. Here some anarchists were able to a sneak in a mobile soundsystem and some unidentified members of the crowd waved a large banner that read 'planet before profit'.

As the station and the surrounding area at Liverpool Street filled up with late-comers at around 9pm, the police decided to clear the area using batons, and they received a sporadic hail of bottles in return.

All in all the event seems to have been far more interesting than its planners intended and sets compelling precedent for London under Boris.

Poverty paparazzi

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'evidence' for their records. For critics of the scheme, it is Orwellian in scope and a demonstration of the extent of police intrusion into everyday life.

Nevertheless, forces across England and Wales are said to be asking Essex police for advice on how they can implement similar measures against young people in problems areas. The Essex initiative and its national roll-out has the full support of, and financial backing from, the Home Office.

Police claim this is just pre-emptive intelligence gathering; protestors say that state filming and surveillance at demonstrations amount to intimidation and harassment and are an infringement on peoples' right to freedom of speech and free assembly. Demonstrations regularly see police photographing protestors and taking down names and addresses, even though the people concerned had done nothing wrong.

This creeping escalation of police power is being resisted on the front line of demonstrations by FITwatch, a group of activists determined to counteract police tactics by directly disrupting FIT operations.

The NUJ is now also on the case. It has seen some of its members fall victim to FIT units' tactics. Writing in an open letter to the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, the union's general secretary said, "A number of members have alleged that the police's surveillance action amounts to virtual harassment and is a serious threat to their right to carry out their lawful employment."

FIT units have been around for some time and originated in the Metropolitan police force's specialist crime directorate, which deals with activity ranging from child abuse and gun crime, but which actively targets anarchists, football hooligans and Islamic fundamentalists.

The police employ civilian cameramen, in what looks like police uniform, who are generally surrounded by actual officers. They each have no real police number. Instead, they all wear the number SCD43, which refers to the forensic unit they work for.

PUBLIC SECTOR

End of workers' rights legislation?

Britain has now reached a point where the government sees no further necessity for major acts of Parliament to ensure the rights of the nation's workers, according to one of its leading members.

Just as the government unveiled new rights for agency workers, the business secretary has signalled that the era of major new workers' legislation is over. His comments attracted a good deal of criticism from unions, who are said to be expecting further concessions from Labour, which badly needs cash to keep the party from bankruptcy.

The government also looks set for a summer of strikes as public sector workers are overwhelmingly rejecting sub-inflation pay deals.

In a speech delivered on 29th May to the centre-left Fabian Society, John Hutton, who heads BERR, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, said: "we have reached the end of the era of considering major new regulation as the best way of improving standards."

Outlining what the government's current and future framework for workers' rights is, Hutton couldn't have been more explicit: "we need to challenge the automatic assumption that the only way to deal with exploitation in the workplace is by passing new laws," he added.

Hutton made it clear that the government was not going to do anything that would harm the economy: "we need to ensure that our framework of employment rights continues to support the competitiveness of our labour market."

It is a message likely to appeal to business leaders, who a week earlier agreed a new deal with the government over temporary and agency workers' rights. Under the new laws, agency staff will have the same rights as permanent workers after three months of continuous employment, as opposed to the 12 months they previously had to wait.

The move came on the back of months of intense lobbying by unions, who will be looking for further concessions from the government, particularly as the Labour Party is believed to be in close to £24m of debt. However, this speech is believed to be Labour's way of signalling to business that they won't be expected to bend any further.

Hutton explained that he sees a light touch role for government: "In future, beyond minimum standards, we must place increasing emphasis on government creating the opportunity for workers and businesses to work out what is best for their own circumstances."

But GMB general secretary, Paul Kenny, did not have much kind to say about uber-Blairite Hutton's comments. "If working people in this country have to rely on John Hutton to protect them, then frankly the best advice is to pack your bags and leave," Kenny said. "He is an absolute non-starter."

John Hutton, whose recent comments have attracted a great deal of criticism.

Refuse workers in dispute

Bin workers across the UK have been flexing their muscles as industrial disputes gather apace. At the end of May, bin workers in Glasgow took to wildcat action over pay, while other official strikes were looming in the rest of the country.

On Friday 23rd May, 170 bin workers walked out because of an overtime pay dispute with bosses at the local council. Workers at the Queenslie and Eastern depots left 15,000 homes without refuse or recycling collections as their employers had failed to cough-up up to £4,000 in extra payments.

Bin workers for Copeland council in Cumbria are out on an indefinite strike over a fight to reduce their working hours. The council has to reduce working time from 45 to 37 hours per week, in line with nationally agreed levels, but to compensate wants workers to put in nine hour-plus shifts.

In East Dunbartonshire, workers at the Hilton refuse collection depot have been fighting severe wage cuts. Staff there have voted 95% in favour of strike action against the local authority's single status pay deal which could see salaries slashed by up to 25%.

In Leeds, refuse collectors and street cleaners could go out on strike again if a single status pay deal is rejected by the GMB workforce. Leeds council came back to workers with an improved offer of pay after three days of strike action last month.

Staff have now suspended their dispute, but if no satisfactory settlement is achieved by 23rd June up to 200 workers will again walk out. A further 800 council employees could be involved in the dispute.

Bin workers generally have a strong track record in fighting cuts. Earlier this year 200 Brighton bin workers took successful wild-cat action against management bullying and under-staffing.

Summer of public sector strikes looms

In what looks set to be a summer of public sector strikes, 850,000 local government workers are being balloted for action against a sub-inflation pay offer.

Unison is asking its members to vote against a paltry 2.45% settlement, the latest in four years of real-term pay cuts. An array of council workers, from carers to librarians and school cooks, could potentially be involved in the mass strike action.

Council workers are being hit hard by the looming recession, with prices for basic foods, fuel and housing up by 40%, 20% and 8% respectively. A 2.45% pay increase for the two-thirds of council staff who earn less than £15,825 per year would mean a meagre £7.45 extra per week in their pockets.

The results of the ballot will be known later in June.

Video-chat with Chomsky

Around 100 people packed into the lecture theatre in the University of Northumbria to raise a series of questions on the state of anarchism and class struggle in global politics today. Despite some technical problems with the webcast, questions ranged from free schools to feminism and the situation in Eastern Europe. Here we print some exclusive exerpts from the Q&A session.

When will we see working class struggle again?
Working class struggle didn't just come out of nowhere; it came out of long periods of organising. In the US we had a high level of violence against labour struggle. In the UK Thatcher spent a lot of time destroying the miners. Now the capacity for violence has been reduced, but it's harder in other ways, like the Free Trade agreements which set poor people against each other all over the world. They are set up to bring the rich together, and pit working people in competition with their fellows in other countries and that makes it harder to organise. For example, Clinton with the NAFTA agreement, it was a clear message to working people that they would not be allowed to organise. Companies could threaten to move to Mexico – even if they had no intention of doing so – if they tried to organise. Union organising dropped by half as a result. Regan's administration told business they wouldn't enforce labour laws, meaning the illegal firing of organisers tripled over that period, so we're seeing class struggle all the time. The question is will we tolerate it?

How do we challenge gender inequalities?
Things have changed enormously over the last forty years. Look at where I work, MIT. If you'd walked down the corridors then you would have seen respectful white in suits and rigid hierarchies. Today it's much like this crowd, half women, informal dress and talk. How did that happen? It wasn't in the 1960s but the seeds were sown then, it was that in the 1970s small, consciousness raising groups helped people recognise that they were oppressed. Change doesn't take place by recognising what exists but by questioning it and doing something about it. Self education, working with others, organising, does make progress. Women's rights over the last forty years are a striking example. My grandmother would have looked at you as if you were mad if you told her she was oppressed. My mother knew she was, but accepted it. Try any of that with my daughters and they'll kick you out of the house.

Politics have become more centrist – there's no 'party of the rich' to organise against any more – how do we get around this?
Organising should not be against it should be for. It shouldn't matter if there is an identifiable enemy or not. I think we can leave to the state power and other forms of authority 'mobilising against the enemy'. Our task is mobilising over what needs to be done to organise a better society.

Is capital drawing away from 'liberal democracy'?
It's true that any opportunity that comes along will be exploited by capitalists and the state to their own benefit – September 11th was exploited by everyone. Businessmen predicted the stock market drop after it and made millions. Very soon after September 11th, I was asked what would happen and I was correct – not because I'm a prophet but because it's a reliable rule of capital. Every liberal democracy in the world will use it to allow them to control and exploit people more efficiently. And this isn't just today. The Patriot Act is bad enough but it doesn't even compare to what the great Woodrow Wilson did by starting the Red Scare – followed by the McCarthy witch hunts.

Why has capitalism become the only option in the Czech Republic following the fall of the USSR?
Well I don't know about the Czech Republic specifically, but in Russia free market capitalism was embraced by the Party hierarchy who realised that they and their friends would be much better under it. They've successfully turned it into a Third World economy. There's a section of the population that's hugely wealthy – there are more Rolls Royce's sold there than in the UK – and the rest are very poor. Immediately after the transition, the economy collapsed by 50%. Some reports suggest that up to 10million died – comparable to Stalin's purges if true. So there are people in Russia that are very well off. But are the people embracing it? In a sense. Putin is popular because he has restored Russia's status and military and so on. Across Eastern Europe there was a very similar picture. And in fact there's a growth of 'left' parties getting into the political system. But the 'discussion' is a bit of as farce. It's true that the west is very wealthy and the idea is for Eastern Europe to become the same. But Eastern Europe has historically been a third world society with a wealthy class feeding the West, which continued to the First World War. Now, it's going back to that. It's growth based on resource exploitation by the state and its companies. And what is capitalism in the West? It doesn't fit the traditional definition – it's a travesty of capitalism. Our technology didn't come from private companies, but from the dynamism of the state sector. Just look at MIT, where some of the biggest breakthroughs have occurred. It's a private institution but state-funded.

IN BRIEF

TURKEY: Fifteen members of the road transport union Türkiye Motorlu Tasit Işçileri Sendikasi (TÜMTIS) are facing criminal charges over union organising campaigns, seven of whom have been in detention since 21st November 2007. If found guilty, the court could take action to close down the union. A trade union delegation is travelling to Turkey next week to support them. The Turkish government is has ratified internationally established conventions protecting trade union rights, which it is now breaking. Turkey continues to suppress trade union activities across many sectors, as well as other campaign and general groups, such as gay rights groups and Kurdish people.

AUSTRIA: On 21st May special forces of the Austrian police forced entry to 23 homes of animal right activists across Austria. Fourteen people were charged with suspected forming of a criminal organisation in connection with direct animal right actions and ten were arrested and are in prison as suspects.

The homes and apartments were entered with pulled weapons and doors were smashed, leaving behind chaos with PCs, files and other papers confiscated. No evidence of any criminal offense could be proved against the 14 people; they were arrested purely on suspicion. Apparently being engaged in animal rights activities was enough of a reason to arrest them. Since the files handed to the lawyers could not prove any criminal offence; application for immediate release was filed. Imposing remand under these circumstances is against international human rights standards.

GUINEA: On 29th May, mutinous young soldiers had been revolting for four days over pay at the largest army base in the world's leading bauxite exporter. They were demanding the dismissal of the country's top military chiefs and were firing in the air and looting. They confronted Conte's presidential guard with both sides firing in the air to intimidate each other. Several people, mostly civilians, have been killed and dozens hurt in the capital Conakry and other towns. The mutiny spread to at least two other garrisons. It has gone on even though new Prime Minister Ahmed Tidiane Souare quickly granted the mutineers' demands for wage arrears to be paid and for the defence minister to be sacked, since the mutineers have also demanded that the heads of the army, navy and air force also be dismissed, accusing them of corruption and of stealing their salaries and food supplies. Soldiers have staged several mutinies and protests over the last 12 years, mostly over pay and conditions. These latest protests will make them a factor in any dispute over the succession to Conte.

Notes from the United States

The State never rests; it now employs more and more private companies to assist in imposing conformity and suppressing dissent. It emerged last month that a private 'security' firm routinely spied on such environmental organisations as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and several other environmental organisations throughout the 1990s. Called Beckett Brown International at the time and run by former Secret Service officials, it later changed its name to S2i. Although it was dissolved in 2001, members of that firm went on to run similar outfits still active today.

The company infiltrated those groups, stole their telephone records and confidential internal documents, and even went through their rubbish. Also clients of Beckett Brown International/S2i were the public relations companies Ketchum (they represented Dow Chemical and Kraft Foods, which owns Taco Bell), Nichols-Dezenhall (they represented Condea Vista, the chemical firm responsible for leaking nearly fifty million pounds of the suspected carcinogen ethylene dichloride into the Calcasieu River in Louisiana in 1994).

Obviously FoE represents the enemy within.

Loyalty

Also a grave threat to the people of the United States must be lecturer Wendy Gonaver. In 1952 the state of California adopted a pledge to be signed by all its employers to 'defend the US and California constitutions against all enemies, foreign and domestic.' With the Stalinism in the Soviet Union no longer touted as the threat it once was, nowadays the same pledge is used chiefly to enforce religious conformity in the land of the free.

Gonavar, from Pennsylvania is a Quaker, and a pacifist. Just before taking up her appointment at the Fullerton campus of the California State University system, she asked for a small statement affirming her non-violent beliefs to be added to the pledge she was expected to take. "I wanted it on record that I am a pacifist," said Gonaver, 38. The university management rejected her request. Clara Potes-Fellow, a university spokesperson said that the university does not permit employees to submit personal statements with the oath: "The position of the university is that her entire added material was against the law."

But it didn't end there. As happened in February this year with another teacher, Quaker Marianne Kearney-Brown, who was fired because she inserted the word 'non-violently' when she signed the oath, Wendy Gonaver's appointment was terminated. It's hard to see how the act of verbalising or signing such a statement as that required by the University would (permanently) deter someone genuinely bent on destroying or even threatening it. It makes more sense as a weapon to enforce uniformity; and – as is perceived by those opposed to the gesture – theoretically it actually obliges employees actually to take up arms against all-comers.

Arms

Talking of arms, military contractor KBR (in which members of the Bush junta have various involvements) reported in May that its profits have tripled thanks to contracts for the war in Iraq. The firm's profits were over $1 million each day in the first three months of 2008.

Iran

Iran continues to occupy the attention of both peace watchers and 'hawks'. Reports circulated throughout May that Bush had signed one of his secret 'findings' authorising a covert offensive against the Iranians which extends to assassinating targeted officials in Iran (and other countries from Lebanon to Afghanistan). Writing on the Counterpunch website, Andrew Cockburn reports that the directive is 'unprecedented in its scope'.

At the end of May (*Asian Times*, 28th May 2008) Muhammad Cohen reported that an 'informed source' suggests that "The George W. Bush administration plans to launch an air strike against Iran within the next two months".

Even more startling plans by the elite that thinks it has the right to do anything appeared in another book, *War and Decision*, which was published recently not by the peace movement or the left, but by the Under-secretary of 'Defense' for Policy at the time of the 2001 attacks in the United States, Douglas Feith. He claims to have evidence that three weeks after the 9/11 attacks Donald Rumsfeld (then 'Defense' Secretary) established an official military objective not only to remove Saddam Hussein by force, as happened of course; but also to overturn the regimes in Iran, Syria and four other countries in the Middle East.

This would appear to be corroborated by comments in *Winning Modern Wars* (2003) by Wesley Clark, (NATO bomber in the Kosovo War). According to him a letter to Bush from Rumsfeld dated 30 September 2001 had a list of states whose governments the US planned (or wanted) to change by force. It included Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan and Somalia. Incidentally, it seems as though Rumsfeld's plan advised against the strikes in Afghanistan which Bush had already authorised in favour of more widespread reshaping of the region.

Louis Further

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libcom.org
libertarian community & organising resource for Britain

Protests over rising oil prices

Background and current round of protests

The last five years have seen rises in oil prices which have been met with resistance. The latest round of protests have mostly been in Western Europe, notably France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium and the UK, but also in Canada and elsewhere.

French fishing workers have been in the vanguard of a wave of protests, to which President Nicolas Sarkozy's government responded with offers of aid. However, French and Spanish fishing workers consider the current amount of legally allowed subsidy to be too low and have demanded additional help. EU Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg said that fuel subsidies are not the answer, because they do not address the underlying problems of rising fuel costs, stable fish prices and dwindling stocks.

Many fishing workers have responded with direct action. On Thursday 29th May, French riot police cleared striking fishing workers from several oil depots. Strikers have blockaded depots and refineries throughout the last three weeks. According to Union leaders, Portugal's entire coastal fleet stayed in port on Friday 30th May and Spain's fishing fleet was at a standstill. There have also been large demonstrations in cities, such as in Brussels, 900 in Quimper (in Brittany), and 10,000 at the agriculture ministry in Madrid, where protesters they handed out 20 tonnes of fresh fish to members of the public in an attempt to draw attention to their ailing industry. Hundreds of farmers have also been blocking oil terminals near the cities of Dijon and Toulouse. Fishing worker's leaders from France, Spain, Italy, Ireland and the UK have been co-ordinating strikes and protests to take place in the three weeks running up to the next European Union fisheries ministers' meeting. In Italy, at least 5,000 fishing workers were expected to go on strike. The secretary of the Mallaig and North-west Fishermen's Association said they aim to make this an EU-wide action campaign with local actions at each port and they do not want to alienate the public, yet the secretary of the Scottish White Fish Producers' Association suggested militancy, including blockades, is a guaranteed way of losing public support (see www.fishupdate.com).

Truckers in Oakland, Canada, have been protesting due to the increasing price of diesel, which is going up faster than that of petrol. Independent truckers are hurt the most by the prices, since motor carriers usually pay the truckers back for fuel in relation to the increases. However, this has meant about 1,000 small trucking companies have gone out of business in the past year. UK, Dutch and Bulgarian lorry drivers have held similar protests in recent weeks.

Causes of rising oil prices

Oil prices have doubled since May 2007, which means something striking must have changed. It is a combination of trading and oil supply, which in turn is related to the amount of oil available and how it is controlled. Sharply escalated trading in oil futures, in the form of speculation and hedge funds, has contributed to price increases, with extreme inflexibility in supply and demand amplifying the situation. Investment in index funds tied to commodities has grown from $13 billion to $260 billion in the last five years and more than 630 energy hedge funds are now placing bets, whereas it was just 180 in 2004. The problem with trying to understand oil prices is that much fundamental information is not freely available, such as that relating to the activity of hedge funds, since the oil industry is unregulated.

US regulators deny that speculators have been a major force and blame growth in demand from China and the Middle East and supply upsets in Russia, Mexico, and the North Sea. It has been suggested that the price rises are partly due to the Opec cartel being unwilling to boost its supply levels, yet as fears about supplies from other countries, such as Nigeria and Venezuela, tend to be the focus of explanations. For example, in Nigeria persistent attacks on oil pipelines since 2006 by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta have reduced Nigeria 's total production. There have been similar attacks on pipelines in various countries, such as Colombia and Mexico. These are often in response to the socio-economic and environmental effects oil production has in local areas. Russia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Kazakhstan and Venezuela, among others, have reasserted growing control over their energy resources, a move popular with their populations, yet resource nationalism carries its own problems for global oil and food supplies.

On Friday 30th May, Thousands of Spanish and Portuguese fishing workers started indefinite strikes, Belgian fishermen protested outside the EU headquarters and in Italy, about 12,000 fishing workers (one-third of the country's fleet) took part in a national strike. With the upcoming fuel demonstration in London, the outcome remains unclear.

PROJECTILE SPECIAL

The community round table

Each year Projectile assemble a panel to discuss a major issue within the movement or its ideas and, to their credit, this year recognised the advent of community organising as the new front of class struggle anarchism.

This has been building for many years, but with no small credit to the non-anarchist IWCA (who were on the panel) it has become the major issue of the day – in theory and practice. This is because there is as much impact and success coming from the developing methods as there is controversy; who is included in a 'community' – and who may be intentionally excluded for anti-social conduct? The rise of legitimate authority for anarchist groups fighting these campaigns was certainly questioned by the audience, but the panel showed a remarkable level of agreement – in fact total – in the answers they gave. One Q&A from each group follows.

The BNP seemingly have more support in working class areas than any left or anarchist group – what the hell are we doing wrong?

Gary, IWCA: I think essentially they're filling a vacuum. There is a huge gulf in politics that's represented in general election turnouts of about 60%. The vast majority of the 40% who don't engage in politics or political debate are working class people. The BNP are perceived to be the radical alternative in many working class communities in the absence of a genuine radical alternative. Their views have swung to the left as well, to accommodate their new audience – they're very much different to where they were in the early 1990s for instance. You could sum it up by saying; they are still fascists, they've adopted the Euro-nationalist model which has worked on the continent, they've applied it over here, people didn't think would work – but it's working and it will continue to work unless its replaced or displaced by people coming from a broadly pro-working class perspective without the fascistic stuff. At core, they're more ambitious than the left at present. They are more ambitious, more organised and better funded. They spend £750,000 a year, which would dwarf anything any other group that has that same working class orientation.

That said there is clear evidence that people do know who the BNP are and know what they are about. When the IWCA stood in the 2004 London Mayoral election we found they voted as a Right bloc – with BNP voters giving their second preference to UKIP or the Tories, and all the IWCA crossover was with Labour. When we stood candidates in Havering they averaged 800 votes each; when they BNP stood in the same ward they also averaged 800 votes. Since we didn't run against each other, it's hard to say whether this was the same 800 both times but it may well not be, looking at the London results. It's straightforward but it's also confusing.

Have LCAP been keeping in contact with the other groups – like the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and the Edinburgh Coalition?

Elena, LCAP: We actually started because one of our members had been over to Canada and worked with the OCAP; our very first meeting was when she showed a film about Ontario and we discussed how we might do something similar. I remember on our first action walking into a housing office with a guy who wasn't even sure if he could trust us – but had no choice because his situation was that bad – and being absolutely terrified. OCAP helped then not only from their advice, but from being an example that the tactic would actually work! It's very comforting to see people who have been doing it for a while and saying – this will work, you will have victories. We had Jane form the Peterborough (Ontario) Coalition come to our first AGM, and she was able to talk about where we might be four years down the line. She talked their amazing 'Special Diet' campaign, where they found a loophole in the law where you could get an increase in your benefits if you could prove you had special dietary requirements. So they set up these huge clinics with left wing doctors and nurses who would say 'this person is suffering from malnutrition because they can't afford enough food', and in some cases people's incomes doubled; she was able to tell us how millions of pounds had been redistributed to working class people by this effort and how successful we could be. It was a real inspiration to us. We're also in touch with Edinburgh, again with our members visiting their meetings – they have a lot to teach us, especially in dealing with bailiffs which is becoming increasingly relevant for LCAP. Also, if anyone wants to start doing similar work we send out delegates to help set up groups, so get in touch if you do.

Scenes from the Projectile anarchist festival held
early arrival in the cinema area; below right, Dave

How do you deal with anti-social elements like drug dealers without going to the police or taking the kind punitive actions the IRA did, and without alienating them?

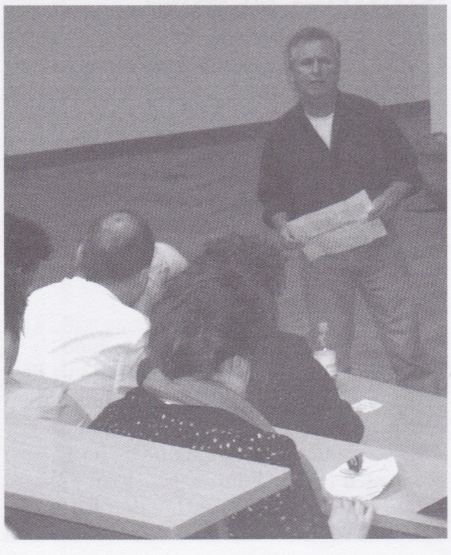
Nick Praxis: Well my personal take on it is, if someone's a drug dealer get them evicted. Get them out of the community. It's not the

d at the end of May in Newcastle – above, one of the evening gigs at the event; below left, an Douglass giving a talk.

role of communities that have very little social capital anyway to absorb all of societies' problems. In the wider situation we tend to talk a lot about union density declining and less workplace organisation, but what isn't mentioned so much is community: community organisation has collapsed. And I think there's been a conscious attempt to run down working class communities. There's a situation in Glasgow where homeless hostels and rehab clinics always get put in the poorest areas, the areas which are least capable of dealing with them. And any time there's an attempt by the council or social services to bring them into richer areas there's outcry over it. That underlines what's been happening really, because in areas where there's more social capital there's still elements of organisation, and in areas where there isn't that organisation we're being shafted. To take a specific example, in the Maryhill area of Glasgow the council decided to demolish a housing scheme there, so they ran the area down for ages, and it got to the point where there were lots of empty houses. And there was a kid there who was hotwiring cars and causing no end of problems, but was actually being protected by the police – because he was linked to drug dealers who were passing the police information. And the council were perfectly happy about this as, because all the tenants were leaving, which facilitated this process of urban clearances. You have to take a firm line on stuff like that, you can't allow our communities to be terrorised. But at the same time you really have to isolate that and stop using state terms like 'anti-social behaviour' where they throw in drug dealers and kids with nothing to do together. You really have to separate these things and deal with them individually – but that requires collective organisation. All these problems require collective organisation, which doesn't exist right now.

How do you keep a community interested and enthused with political activity?

Mat, HSG: It shouldn't just be reactive. I'm a member of my local Residents Association, and the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations – where any Residents Association across the borough is encouraged to federate to this us, and it's completely independent of the council who hate and avoid us. There's also friends of parks groups which protect and improve the parks in the borough, involved in things like campaigning to bring back Park Keepers. But we don't just concentrate of campaigning against bad things. We organise good things for ourselves, just because it's good to bring the community together for a positive reason, not just against something. So in my local park the residents associations have organised a free festival for several years with bands and stalls for independent political groups (but no Parties). There was a debating tent at the last one – as well as all the usual stuff you'd expect at a village fair or fete. This year the council tried their own very similar event but with council branding all over it, but report-backs say it was nowhere as near as good as ours! This year was our first Haringey Independence Day where any organisation in the borough that encourages independent working class self –organisation were encouraged to come have stalls and hold meetings, watch films and have food. It got about 300 people and lots of positive feedback with groups making informal links for the future. We also do Haringey Independent Cinema every month – the next film we're showing is The Unbearable Lightness of Being and 3 environmental films. It attracts 60 – 100 people and we all go to the pub and discuss the films and the issues. It's a really positive experience and it means that you can walk along your street and know your neighbour, which in London is rare, but every day I bump into people in the street. So, do positive things, as well as trying to get people onto political actions.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

The eagle-eyed among you will have probably noticed that this issue is a Projectile Special, with a report on page 1, the Chomsky webcast which opened the festival on page 5 and a feature on pages 8 and 9. Several *Freedom* folk attended this excellent DIY festival in Newcastle, and a good time was had by all.

Meanwhile, back in Angel Alley, the long-awaited mammoth task of moving the bookshop to the ground floor is in progress. Our vast stock of books on the ground floor is being moved to a new home and, once the area is cleared, work can then begin on fixing up the place. This is a pretty big undertaking, so any assistance we can get would be greatly appreciated. Get in touch with us at shop@freedompress.org.uk if you're able to lend a hand, or just pass by and have a chat with either Andy or Mo at the bookshop.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 21st June 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 12th June. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

A few weeks ago I went to a leaving do for someone I used to work with. I was out of touch and didn't even know he was going. It was the usual story when I caught up with him – offered a 'take it or leave it' redundancy just before the end of the financial year by the ALMO he had recently been transferred into, as were several of his colleagues.

For those of you who don't know, an ALMO is an Arms Length Management Organisation, a council-owned company set up to run housing as a first step to full privatisation.

All of them looked really well and had been overjoyed to get out of the ALMO, though there was a 'no disclosure' clause attached to the payment, so they couldn't say what they felt about the current management. It didn't take a genius to guess, though.

Everyone I spoke to there who hadn't yet been made redundant had the same gloomy look. The boss of the ALMO, brought in at a salary of about £130,000, was described as dictatorial and bullying. There are no checks on him in his own realm, so he can go round driving people out and threatening staff with the sack at the drop of a hat. I find it odd that people can see what's wrong with that approach in politics, but don't see how it is endemic in the workplace. Bosses are generally accountable to no one but themselves – there is a fiction that they are accountable to shareholders but it never actually works in practice. And the only shareholder for the ALMO is the council, whose only desire is to get rid of council housing.

The ALMO was set up to get extra investment for council housing under the government's labyrinthine rules. To do so, it must reach two stars in the next inspection by the Audit Commission.

After the stress of the transfer from the council, there is going to be a reorganisation, adding more stress. None of the staff I spoke to thought they would get two stars. One of the directors has been 'disappeared' – no one knew what had happened to her but she was no longer there and her post had been removed from the organisation charts. I've yet to find if she's been airbrushed from any photos. The council has under-invested in housing for years, hoping for stock transfers and other schemes. The officers charged with wasting loads of money on these schemes have done well, but I'll return to that issue in future. The workers in the ALMO are having a tougher time of it, and you can only pity the residents on the estates. They've waited years for improvements, the council has been consistently criticised by the Audit Commission on its repairs service, but what do they get now? The local offices have all shut, the repairs are still rock bottom, the staff are pissed off, but at least there are new letterheads, in colour, and the estates have new signs with a new logo.

For while other services are scaled back, the three areas the ALMO is spending a lot more on are senior management, lawyers and PR. There are loads of glossy new leaflets and posters – a priority for tenants I'm sure. And a lot more money that could have gone on repairs wasted instead.

Blog Bites

(from davidosler.com)

Home secretary Jacqui Smith – a woman who has confessed to using cannabis as a student – has today confirmed that cannabis is to be reclassified as a class B drug. The decision has been welcomed by the Conservative Party. As we know, Tory leader David Cameron was, at the age of 15, confined to the grounds of Eton College for two weeks after being caught with a joint. It comes just days after the election of Boris Johnson – a man who admits smoking "quite a few spliffs" as a schoolboy and finding them "jolly nice" – was elected mayor of London. Former chancellor Norman Lamont has incredibly enough confessed to eating space cakes, while Alistair Darling, the man currently in charge of the Treasury, also knows what to do with three Rizlas and a ripped up cigarette packet.

Under the law as it stood at the time of these people's youthful experimentation, and as it will now be again, all of them could theoretically have been sent to prison for five years for simple possession. True, custodial sentences are rarely dealt out to young people nicked with a bag of grass about their person. But as ever with law and order issues, there is a class dimension to how the punishment operates.

When I was a working class teenager in the 1970s, my friends were regularly fined the equivalent of two to three weeks' wages if the Old Bill found them in possession of small quantities of dope. That constitutes retribution qualitatively more severe than being 'gated' for a fortnight at Britain's top public school.

Today, a caution is by far the most likely outcome in such cases. But, as the Metropolitan Police's own research discovered two years ago, in instances where charges are pressed, black people are disproportionately likely to find themselves in the dock.

In the view of experts such as the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, there is no strong case for reclassification. What is more, with dozens of MPs of all persuasions on record as having used cannabis in the past, it can have little credibility with the public.

This is, in other words, New Labour gesture politics of a potency on a par with such legendary seventies marijuana variants as Thai Stick. In practical terms, reclassification will have no effect whatsoever.

The only proffered justification – advanced by the prime minister a few weeks back – is that it 'sends a message' to young people that cannabis use is 'unacceptable'.

Teenagers, who rarely hold anyone over 40 in particularly high regard anyway, will draw a 'message' from this pronouncement, alright. But I suspect it will not be the one for which Gordon Brown is hoping.

Their rather more likely conclusion will be that middle-aged white politicos who preach the virtues of doubling already hefty prison sentences for offences they themselves committed 20 or 30 years ago are a bunch of hypocritical old farts. In this, the youth of today might not be far wrong.

Pay offer correction

Your article on the NHS pay offer (*Freedom*, 12th April) is wrong in stating that RCN and Unison have "signed up to the offer". They helped to broker it, but it still [went] out to a ballot of the membership in these two unions. A recent survey by Nursing Times found that 75% of readers (many who are RCN members) were not happy to accept three years of pay cuts.

Unison's executive are not (supposed to be) recommending either way, and a motion was carried at conference which allowed branches to set their own recommendation this year. Many many branches including mine campaign[ed] hard to get a no vote. (*but*, having said all that, the deliberately confusing blurb coming out from the unelected Unison leadership is so despicably positive about the offer that they might as well be recommending acceptance...)

It's an easy mistake to make, what with the tone of the spin Unison are putting on this offer, but it's simply innacurate. As for the last sentence, about 'whatever Unison's motives are' ... Karen Jennings Unison Head of Health has been promised a cosy safe seat in the near future as a Labour minister... hmmmm... don't need to be a genius to figure out who's paying that piper...

B. Kirkpatrick

Editor's note: This letter was sent before the vote but just missed our deadline, so has been edited to take account of this.

Shop stewards' conference analysis

Anarchists were among the 65 delegates who registered at the North West conference of trade union activists on 19th April, making it perhaps the most successful rank and file gathering in Manchester for a long time. Since the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) was officially foundeda last year this Manchester assembly was second only to the London regional conference (74 delegates) in numbers. Among the delegates in Manchester were a number of radical syndicalists including supporters of the Northern Anarchist Network and members of the editorial panel of *Northern Voices*.

There was criticism of the failure of union officials and, in particular, from Steve Acheson who talked of their involvement on local building sites in enforcing the blacklist against trade union militants, but others in the white collar jobs talked of the drag of the full time officials on their disputes.

The electricians have just drawn £90,000 between the three of them for being victimised for trade union activities. Another speaker spoke of thirty years of defeats for the trade union movement and said we have to use the NSSN 'to understand these defeats' and to turn the tide.

Just before this NSSN conference the Office of Fair Trading had accused many major construction companies, including Balfour Beatty and Carrillion, of forming Cartels to rob the tax payer, amid claims that they are involve in bid-rigging and prict fixing.

What does this mean to anarchists and the National Shop Stewards' Network? It means that very often we are little more than a Dad's Army reacting to agendas set t others: by big business and people in the offices of State. This has been a systemic failure of the British left for generations from the anarchists and environmentalists to the left-wing socialists. Whether in the trade unions or in the leftist parties there are no pro-active policies or strategy for change.

That is why it was thoroughly depressing to hear Pat Sikorski, assistant Secretary of the RMT, tell the Conference of the need to look: for another left party to solve our problems. Fortunately the NSSN has a reasonable radical syndicalist contingent that is anti-party political and has a libertarian fringe. In the London region one of the leading activists is a member of the Solidarity Federation with contacts among the Underground workers and rail workers. In the North East where there have been regional meetings in Newcastle there are reports that the militant anarcho-syndicalist Dave Douglass may be getting involved in the NSSN there.

Brian Bamford

Slow conversations

My reflections (Letters,15th December) on Brian Morris's review of Karen Armstrong's book (*The Great Transformation*, reviewed in *Freedom* on 20th October) were honoured by a response from Brian eleven weeks later (Letters, 2nd March). Only nine weeks have passed since then (I'm writing on 4th May) so I presume it's not too late to respond to his response. Anyhow, here goes.

To refresh the memories of those readers who may not quite remember the details, Brian wrote in his review: "Religious teachers such as Confucius, Buddha and Jesus were simply expressing the moral values of the common people" and "Humans of all cultures (including humanists and anarchists) have opposed greed, egoism, hatred, intolerance and violence, and stressed the importance of compassion, generosity, mutual aid, sharing, non-violence, and respect for others."

Reflecting on that, I argued: "But if humans of all cultures have always been so keen on compassion, etc., would the world today be in such a sorry state? How come all these weapons of mass destruction?" Brian's response was to explain that the dreadful weapons and the sorry state of the world are due to "the rise of hierarchical forms of domination, of state power, and in the modern context, of the capitalist system."

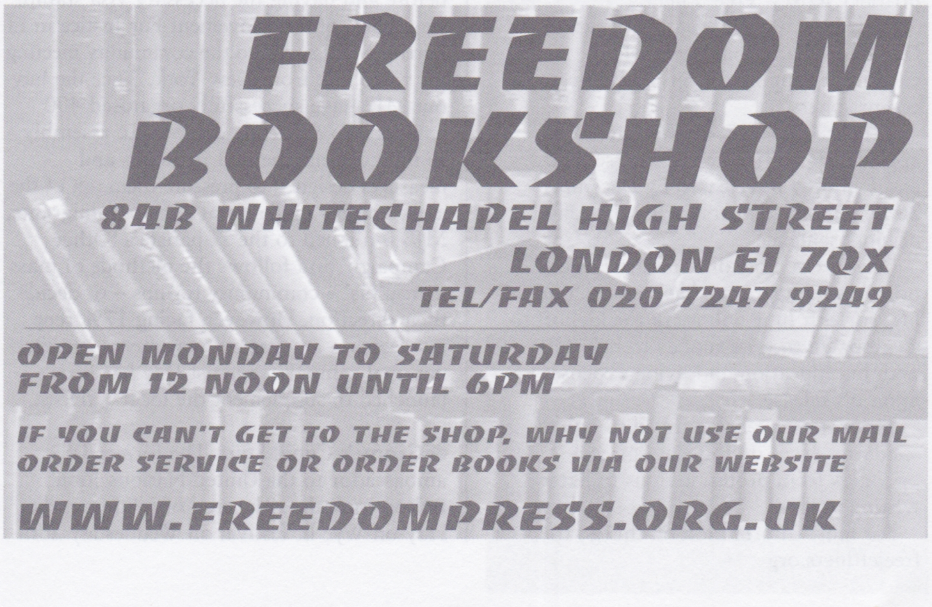
I don't find that convincing. If the common people of all cultures had really been of such great moral stature they would never have supported any form of domination whatsoever. They would rather have died than submit to a master, and therefore masters would have been unknown. There would never have been a capitalist system, or any of these stupid childish nation-states with their ruthless competitive ethos leading inevitably to organised mass murder. Humans would all be living together as one family, looking after the planet properly and making it a beautiful home fit for bringing up their children, not this diabolical madhouse.

In my critique of Brian's review I advised him to read Krishnamurti. He retorts, "I've been reading Krishnamurti on and off for the past forty years". So have I (since 1965 in fact) so apparently one of us at least has misunderstood him. For my part, I think Krishnamurti meant that the mess in the world is nothing but a projection of the confusion in our consciousness ("The crisis is in our consciousness," he said), and therefore the one and only way to clear it up is through clear perception (or, to quote one of his key phrases, "choiceless awareness"). Class struggle and "direct action", far from being necessary, as Brian thinks, are actually part of the mess, in Krishnamurti's view as I understand it.

Incidentally, I'd be interested to know what evidence Brian has for asserting that Krishnamurti "filched ideas right left and centre from anarchism, Buddhism, and existentialism (without any acknowledgement or reference)".

Francis Ellingham

Editor's note: We should note that the letter's a bit older than that by now – our fault, as we take a while to clear the backlog of letters sometimes!



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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Support Juan

Juan Antonio Sorroche Fernandez was arrested and jailed for making spray-paint slogans in Bologne, Italy, denouncing the forced psychiatric hospitalisation of a girl sleeping in a piazza.

The incident caused great tension in the local area amongst the people and many expressed their anger at the police and the city. Juan is serving ten months.

You can write to him at: Juan Antonio Sorroche Fernandez, C.C. Poggioreale, via Nuova Poggioreale 177, 80143 Napoli, Italy

Plea for Help

The G20 Arrestee Solidarity Network are asking for support with the ongoing saga of detentions and legal fallout resulting from a massive police operation against activists in Australia who protested against a meeting of the G20 last year.

While some G20 arrestees will be eligible for legal aid or are receiving *pro bono* support from a legal firm, some need to pay for their own legal and transportation costs. Some potentially face fines of several thousand dollars. The network are asking anyone who can to make a donation.

Email afterg20@gmail.com or check the website at afterg20.org for further details. Other requests include:

- Start a local solidarity group for G20 arrestees and all those facing political repression. Have a letter writing party for Akin (Sari, who has been sentences to 28 months for rioting and burglary), or hold a fundraiser.
- Get the word out. Talk to your friends, family, and colleagues.
- Support similar struggles where you are and overseas.

For more information on Down Under, go to october15thsolidarity.info.

Jeff anniversary

June 2008 marks the eigth anniversary of the imprisonment of green activist prisoner Jeffrey 'Free' Luers.

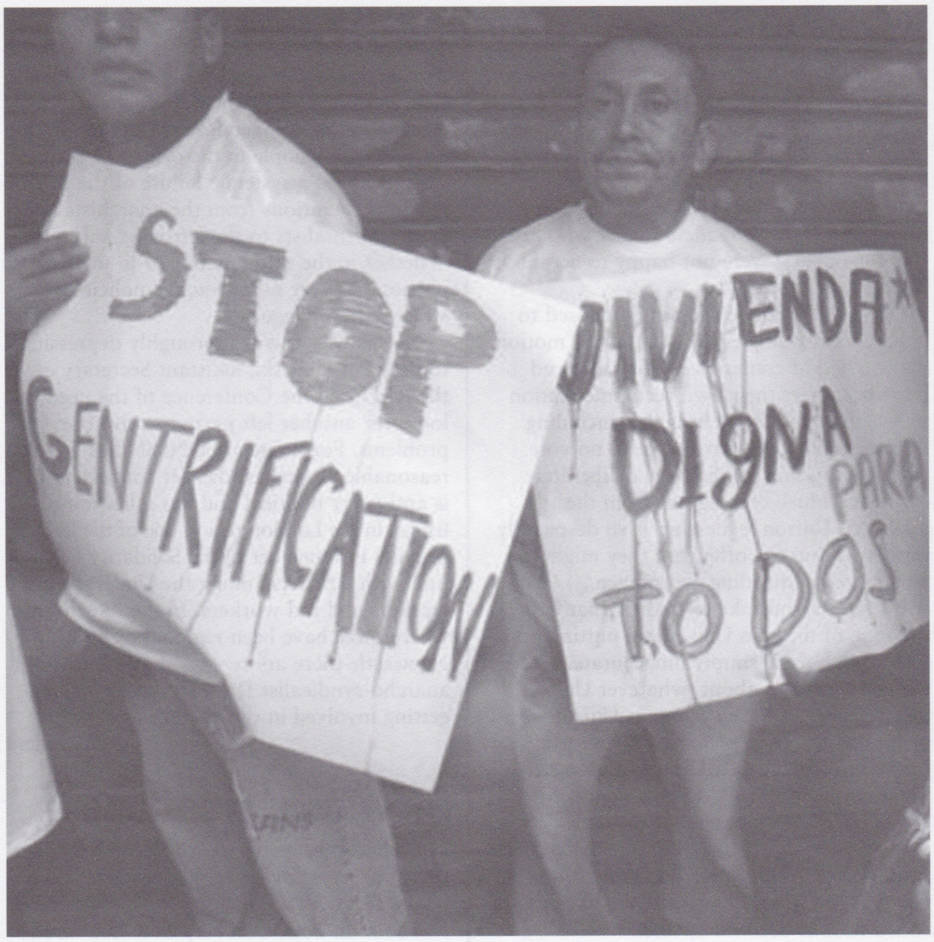
Each June for the past eight years, a Day of Solidarity has been held to encourage support for Jeff and other eco-prisoners.

In February 2008, after winning his appeal, Jeff received a reduced sentence and will now be released by December 2009; almost 13 years earlier than his original sentence.

One of the most difficult aspects of prison is reintegrating back into a 'normal' life, so 14th June will mark the kickoff to a campaign to raise money to help Jeff with his education and living expenses upon his release.

Supporters are being urged to hold a solidarity event on this day for eco-prisoners from protest actions to letter writing parties.

For more information on this go to freejeffluers.org



● **NYC 'Zapatistas' in Hackney** London investment bank Dawnay Day purchased 1,137 largely one and two-bedroom flats in 47 buildings in East Harlem, known locally as 'El Barrio', in March 2007 with the express purpose of clearing the area of its low income tenants to make way for wealthy professionals. Phil Blakeley, director leading his firm's US expansion, said: "East Harlem is the last area of the whole of Manhattan being gentrified … It is a bit like buying in Brixton 15 years ago…"

It was not Brixton, but Dalston, that was addressed by a tenant campaigner two weeks ago. Denied entry into the UK by immigration, despite having already visited the week before and having the necessary visa stamp, Juan Haro of the Movement For Justice in El Barrio (MJB) spoke to the community meeting via video link from New York. Since the buy-out MJB have successfully organised 400 tenants into a directly democratic assembly to fight against the rent increases and measures designed to pressure them out of the area. Largely made up of Latino immigrants, MJB is aligned to the Zapatista's 'Other Campaign' and follows the methods of mass 'consultas' – community forums – to decide their direction. However, facing 17% rent increases on any vacant apartments, an international campaign against Day has been launched to supplement the local activism.

● **George's Cupid Stunt** The former US ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton took the risky step of talking at the Hay-on-Wye lit festival on Wednesday 28th May. So enraged by the sheer injustice of it all was activist journo Georges Monbiot that he took the unprecedented step of 'celebrity citizen's arrest' that has worked so well against George Bush and Robert Mugabe over the years. Amazingly he had only just finished mumbling "John Robert Bolton, I am arresting you for the charge of aggression, the crime of aggression, as defined by the Nuremberg Principles" when he was hauled off by security – who clearly hadn't got round to reading them yet. What is the world coming to when the one half of the coalition that invaded Iraq won't prosecute the other half? This would never happen under George's proposed World Government we are sure. By sheer coincidence Monbiot is launching collection of his columns this week, in book form.

Phil Space

● **Liberty & Solidarity** New libertarian communist organisation Liberty & Solidarity held their founding conference in early May, announcing they have groups in London , Birmingham and Reading . "We have come together to build a democratic organisation that can and will make quick decisions, that focuses on effectiveness over ideology, and looks at the tough questions – like crime and poverty – with ambition and vision" its national secretary told *Freedom*. The group adheres to tight organisational principles such as a constitution and delegate democracy, but continues to have dual members with the existing federations and work in broad based groups and struggles.

Max Stirner

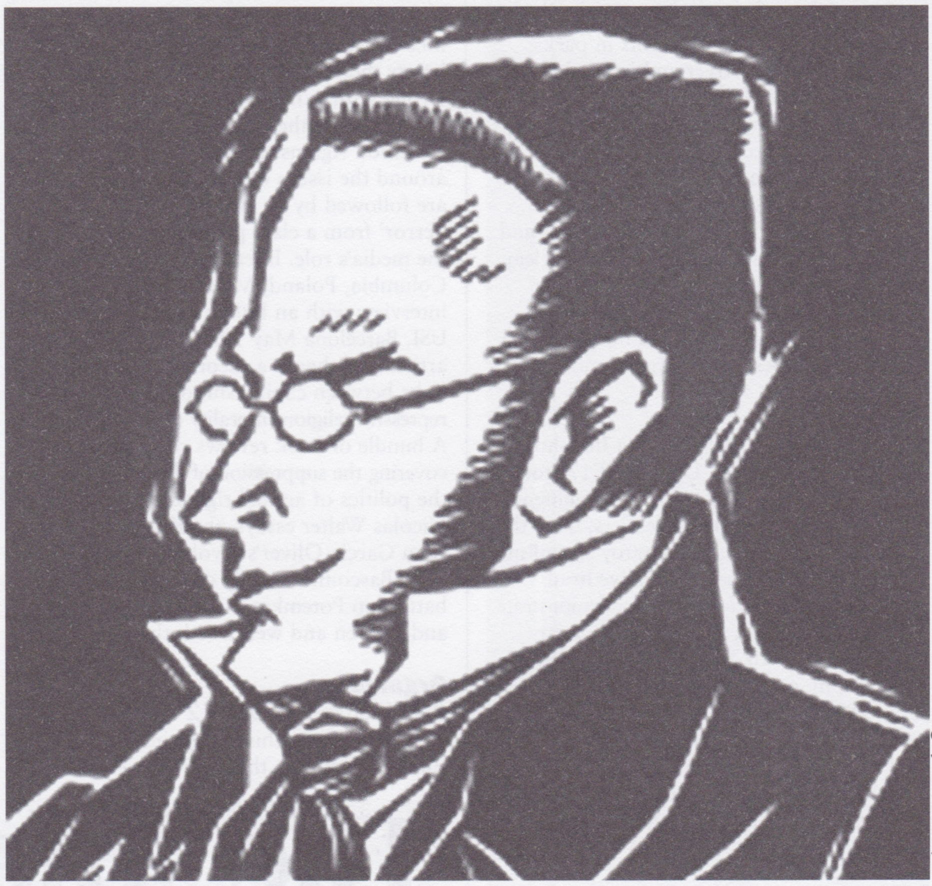
Johann Kaspar Schmidt (1806–1856), better known as Max Stirner (the *nom de plume* he adopted from a schoolyard nickname acquired as a child), was a German philosopher today seen as one of the intellectual forefathers of nihilism, existentialism, post-modernism and individualist forms of anarchism. His main work, *The Ego and Its Own*, first published in Leipzig in 1844, has since appeared in countless editions and translations.

Born in Bayreuth on 25th October 1806, the son of the lower-middle-class couple Albert Christian Heinrich Schmidt and Sophia Eleonora, Stirner attended the city's prestigious Gymnasium before moving on in 1826 to study philosophy under Schleiermacher, Marheineke and Hegel at the University of Berlin. He continued his studies at the University of Erlangen in 1829 and the University of Königsberg, before returning to Berlin, where he completed his studies in 1834.

In 1835 – the year Stirner's mother was committed as insane to Die Charité hospital in Berlin – Stirner took his oral exams in the subjects he intended to teach, but was only awarded a conditional *facultas docendi* and rejected as Gymnasiallehrer by the Royal Brandenburg Commission for Schools. In 1837 he married Agnes Klara Kunigunde Butz, the daughter of his landlady. In 1839 Stirner was given a position teaching literature at a girls' school in Berlin. In 1841 he joined Die Freien (The Free), a group of left Hegelians gathering at Hippel's Weinstube. It was in this group he met Marie Dähnhardt who, in 1843, became his second wife.

In 1842, as well as various journalistic articles Stirner published *Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung* (The False Principle of our Education) and *Kunst und Religion* (Art and Religion) in *der Rheinische Zeitung*, before in 1844 releasing his magnum opus *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* (The Ego and Its Own). Here he launched a radical anti-authoritarian and individualist critique of contemporary Prussian society and modern Western society as a whole. He offered an approach to human existence that depicts the self as a creative non-entity, beyond language and reality. The book proclaims that all religions and ideologies rest on empty concepts. The same holds true for society's institutions that claim authority over the individual, be it the state, laws, the church or the systems of education (e.g. Universities). Stirner's argument explores and extends the limits of Hegelian criticism, aiming his critique especially at those of his contemporaries, particularly Ludwig Feuerbach, and popular ideologies including nationalism, statism, liberalism, socialism, communism and humanism.

Copies of *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* were quickly distributed to bookstores to avoid censorship, and the book dated 1845.



Drawing by Clifford Harper

After leaving his teaching job in 1844 Stirner attempted to invest Marie Dähnhardt's inherited fortune in commercial enterprise. He failed and ended up in dire financial straits, and Marie left him in 1846. Following the publication of *The Ego and Its Own* he wrote two essays in reply to his critics that give a good insight into the core of his philosophy – *Recensenten Stirner's* (Stirner's critics), a reply to Feuerbach, Szeliga and Hess, in Wigand's Vierteljahrschrift in 1845, and *Die Philosophischen Reaktionaere* (The philosophically reactionary), a reply to Kuno Fischer, under the name 'G. Edward' in the fifth volume of *Wigands Epigonen* in 1847. That year he published the first German translation of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* into German. His last book was a *Geschichte der Reaktion* (History of the Reaction) published in 1852. In May 1856 he contracted a fever and he died on 25th June that year.

At no point during his career did Stirner identify himself as an anarchist, and he includes anarchists among the parties subjected to his criticism, mocking 'revolution' in the traditional sense as tacitly statist. Nonetheless, his claim of the illegitimacy of the state has made him a major influence on the anarchist tradition and his philosophy is most often seen as a form of individualist anarchism.

Stirner is credited as an influence on the development of nihilism, existentialism, post-modernism and anarchism, especially of individualist anarchism and postanarchism. His thought has been cited as an influence both on his contemporaries, notably Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx as well as subsequent thinkers such as Enrico Arrigoni, Steven T. Byington, Benjamin R. Tucker and Saul Newman.

As with the Classical Skeptics, Stirner's method of self-liberation is opposed to faith or belief; life is free from 'dogmatic pre-suppositions' or any 'fixed standpoint', thus also anticipating certain post-Left anarchists (*cf.* Jason McQuinn's essay 'Demoralising Moralism'). He condemns not just Christian dogma but also a variety of European atheist ideologies as crypto-Christian for putting ideas in an equivalent role.

Central to Stirner's thought was the idea that it is not that concepts should rule people, but that people should rule concepts. The denial of absolute truth is rooted in his notion of the 'nothingness' of the self. Stirner presents a detached life of non-dogmatic, open-minded engagement with the world 'as it is' (unpolluted by 'faith', Christian or humanist), coupled with the awareness that there is no soul, no personal essence of any kind.

(Adapted from 'A Human Life', at nonserviam.com)

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JUNE

14th World Naked Bike Ride, assemble at Broad Walk in Hyde Park, London, at 3pm, see worldnakedbikeride.org.uk

until 21st Haringey Sustainability Weeks, as part of the London-wide initiative there will be a range of green events in parks, schools, halls, the street and in workplaces in order to spread green ideas far and wide throughout the borough, for more details vist sustainableharingey.org.uk

23rd to 28th International Anti-Nuclear Festival at Eurajoki in Finland, close to Olkiluoto which is the the nuclear plant and building site of the world's biggest nuclear reactor, see olkiluoto.info/en for details

28th to 6th July Open eco-houses in Brighton and Hove, visit eco-houses in the area, see ecoopenhouses.org for more.

JULY

1st Archive work nights at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 from 7pm – no experience needed, just willingness to shuffle papers and sort leaflets, meet the nerds at 56a, drink tea and destroy capitalism (slowly)!! See 56a.org.uk/archive.html

4th Independence *from* America, demonstrate at the US spy base, Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, North Yorkshire from 5pm until 10pm, call 01423 884076 or mobile 07949897906, email percy@starbecj.eclipse.co.uk or see caab.org.uk for details

7th to 9th G8 Summit at Toya Lake, Hokkaido in northern Japan, for details see http://linux7.sanpal.co.jp/no-g8

AUGUST

4th to 11th Climate Camp at e.on's proposed new Kingsnorth coal fired power station near Rochester, Kent, with day of action against agrofuels on Wednesday 6th and a day of mass action on Saturday 9th August, see climatecamp.org.uk

7th to 10th Northern Green Gathering, somewhere in North Yorkshire, for more see nggonline.org.uk

13th to 18th Earth First! Summer Gathering, those involved (or who want to be) in radical ecological direct action get together for five days to talk, walk, share skills, learn, play, rant, find out what's going on, what's next, live outside, strategise, hang out, incite, laugh and conspire, see earthfirstgathering.org.uk

21st to 24th International Animal Rights Gathering, a time to get together and talk, to socialise and build up networks, to be held south of Vienna, Austria, at the foot of the massive Schneeberg mountain, see ar2008.info

SEPTEMBER

6th Belfast Anarchist Bookfair at Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre from 12 noon until 6pm, see http://belfastanarchistbookfair.blogspot.com

7th London Vegan Festival from 10am to 8pm at Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8, see vegancampaigns.org/festival for more.

MAGAZINES

Direct Action

#42 (Summer 2008), £1.50

Latest issue of the magazine of the Solidarity Federation has appeared with an interesting mix of articles. After the introduction and letters there's a brief summary of what is wrong with existing unions, underpayment of workers in the catering business, London Coalition Against Poverty, and other items around the issues of class and poverty. These are followed by an critique of The 'War on Terror' from a class perspective and one on the media's role. International struggles cover Columbia, Poland, Mexico, Iran and an interview with an Italian syndicalist from the USI. Barcelona May 1937 is the main history article and there's a theoretical piece on the links between capitalism, patriarchy and repressive religious morality regarding sexuality. A bundle of book reviews complete this issue covering the suppression of dissent in the USA, the politics of animal rights, the book of Nicolas Walter essays, the KSL pamphlet of Juan Garcia Oliver's revolutionary life, and Neal Bascombe's study of the mutiny on the battleship Potemkin. All clearly presented and written and well worth the money!

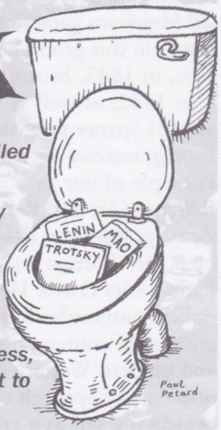
Organise

70 (Summer 2008), £2

Maybe two anarchist magazines do make a summer. Anyway, the Anarchist Federation have unleashed their magazine and this issue majors on anti-fascism. After the introduction the get down to business with a Bash the Fash article looking at the history of British anti-fascism and the current scene; fascism and democracy are then presented as two cheeks of the same arse. At which point the magazine has a detailed look at Dominic Streatfield's book on brainwashing (which I haven't read but looks interesting!), followed by a look at 'Social Centres'.

After this detour, the magazine returns to its main theme with a look at contemporary Balkan nationalism with a focus on Bulgaria. The fortieth anniversary of Paris 1968 gets an inevitable once over, followed by a look at Russian Constructivism and the relationship with anarchism.

Thence the reviews, which cover magazines including *Abolishing Borders From Below* and *Black Flag*; books including the study *Beer and Revolution* about German anarchists in New York 1880–1914 (which I can thoroughly recommend if you can find someone else to buy it for you); Felix Feneon's *Novels in Three Lines*; *Where Vultures Feast* on Shell, oil and Nigeria, and finally two English history pamphlets from Past Tense. *Organise* is a varied and informative package, well written and laid out (but more information on the titles reviewed might be useful.)



The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

Get your copy now for £5 (post free) by mail order from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (cheque/PO made out to Freedom Press) or from www.freedompress.org.uk

QUIZ ANSWERS

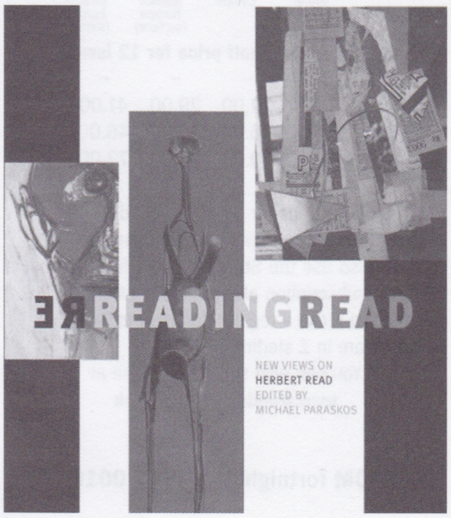
1. Benito Mussolini. He obviously wasn't paying attention…
2. Peterborough. Tory Gul Nawaz was chosen as Deputy Mayor by the City's councillors; former Labour Mayor Mohammed Choudhary was jailed in APril after being convicted of electoral fraud. Politicians, don't you just love 'em.
3. Insurance against the collapse of between a third and a half of all major companies in the global capitalist system. The only scenario one banker could suggest for it being paid out was a "revolutionary marxist government in Washington". Should the end of the global capitalist system come about, it's likely to affect insurance companies too. It's newsworthy because the price of this insurance has gone up tenfold.
4. Experiments with Nanotubes, which are microscopic cylinders, on mice have yielded asbestosis-like symptoms for certain lengths of tube. The story of asbestos is riddled with cover-up and denial, so we should get in quick.

Rereading Read

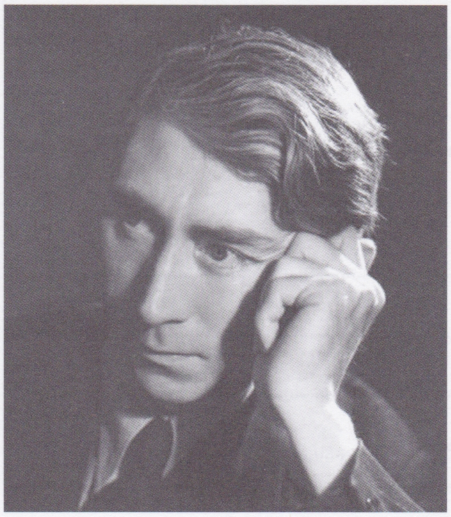
The design of this book is striking. Scholarly books in Britain are nearly all designed on the 'crystal goblet' principle. The metaphorical crystal goblet is a wineglass which does not distract the attention of the oenophile from the wine, and good book design strives to be 'invisible', not to distract the reader from the writing. *Rereading Read* is designed on an entirely different principle. Written words are presumed to be boring, so the reader needs to be entertained with a striking design. Each chapter starts, either on a coloured page with the first six lines of text in large, bold, white lettering, or on a white page with the first six lines in big, bold, pale grey lettering, switching to tiny black type in mid-sentence, or even in one case mid-word ("**In Aesthe**- tic Theory…"). Some pages are meaninglessly printed on a coloured ground, or in white on black, again switching in mid-sentence.

The scholarly essays, consisting largely of quotations from other works on the same subjects, are quite readable when you get through to them. The sixteen erudite authors, from six countries, follow much the same trade as Herbert Read, writing and lecturing on art, art history, and aesthetic philosophy.

We gather that Herbert Read rose from humble origin to become a member of the 'Great and Good' who get appointed to official Committees (he probably spoke broad Yorkshire as a lad, but when I met him as an adult he spoke posh 'Received Pronunciation'). When he was seven his father died in an accident, and he spent the rest of his childhood in an orphanage in Halifax. As a teenager he was employed as a clerk in Leeds, and joined the Leeds Arts Club, where he learned a lot from important fellow-members, before going on to study at Leeds University. In the First World War he was an infantry officer, awarded the Military Cross and the DSO. After the War he was an Assistant Keeper at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and in 1931 he was appointed Professor of Fine Art at Edinburgh University. In the 1930s and 1940s, following the publication of his seminal *Art Now* (1933) he was Britain's best known art expert.



He was also an anarchist, not just an intellectual poseur, but an active and useful contributor to the anarchist movement (see the Freedom Press compilation of his writings, *A one-man manifesto*, edited by David Goodway). Read's Poetry and anarchism, published by Freedom Press in 1938, and his *Anarchy and Order* published by Faber and Faber in 1949, emphasise the aesthetic appeal of anarchism. His one novel, *The Green Child*, is a delightful fantasy about an anarchistic society in a beautiful country underground.



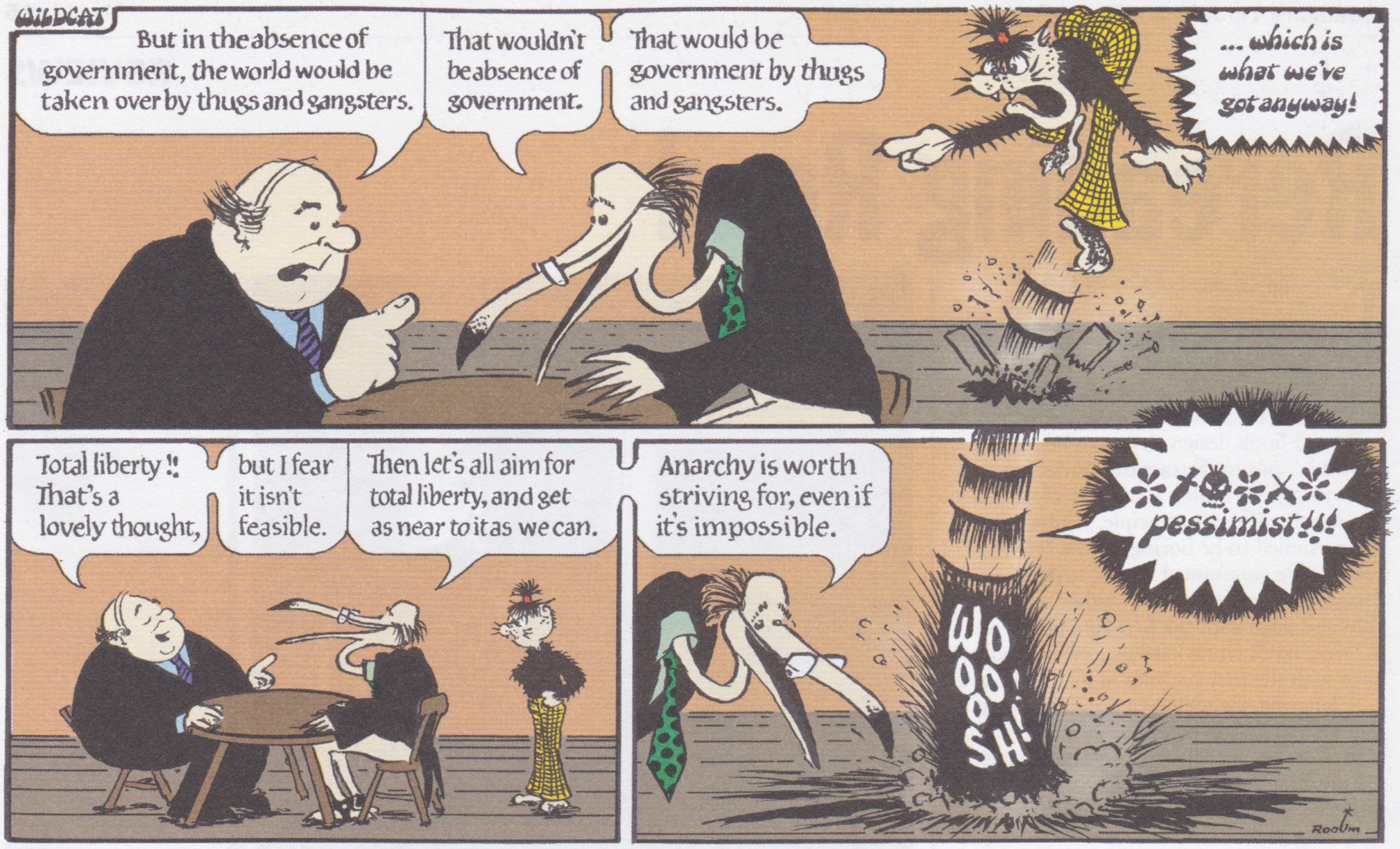
As World War Two was ending, the editors of *War Commentary* for anarchism (as *Freedom* was called at the time) were charged with the crime of conspiring to incite members of His Majesty's forces to disaffection. Herbert Read energetically contacted famous people who were concerned for civil liberties, and formed the Freedom Press Defence Committee, to oppose the prosecution and collect funds for the defence.

I was told by the late Vero Richards, a friend of Read and editor of *Freedom*, that in 1952 or early 1953, Read told Vero he had received an official letter asking if he would accept a knighthood. Vero had the impression that Read intended to say no, but Read accepted.

As an art pundit, Read is a figure from the past, remembered and respected, but no longer fashionable. As an anarchist he is mostly remembered, unfortunately and perhaps unfairly, as the anarchist who kissed the queen's arse.

Donald Rooum

Rereading Read: new views on Herbert Read, edited by Michael Paraskos, Freedom Press, £19.75


WILDCAT
But in the absence of government, the world would be taken over by thugs and gangsters.
That wouldn't be absence of government.
That would be government by thugs and gangsters.
... which is what we've got anyway!
Total liberty!! That's a lovely thought,
but I fear it isn't feasible.
Then let's all aim for total liberty, and get as near to it as we can.
Anarchy is worth striving for, even if it's impossible.
!@×* pessimist!!!
WOOOOSH!
Rooum

The Iron Column

How to whine like the British People's Party. Step one – opponents: think of a number. Double it. Add ten. Triple it. This is how many reds there were to each fascist. Now arm them with outlandish weapons that they are surely not afraid to use, but nonetheless, never do. If your opponents are gay (see BPP and NF's fun day out at the Brighton Pride march last summer) then they were definitely 'not poofy gays' but coked up steroid infused gays. If your opponents are left wing then they were not 'student reds' but jew-paid gangster reds in league with the police. Even if the police turn up to save you, they were in league with the police. End with an impassioned call for more attendees at your next event to prevent this from happening again, as everybody knows the best way to promote an event is to suggest it comes with a free beating. If you are doing it right, it should sound something like this:

"This post is to make people aware of the events of Saturday [date] and the attack by [group] on the BPP Victoria meeting and to prevent the same thing happening again to any Nationalist group. There is no denying [they] had at their disposal up to 35 people and they were organised, disciplined, informed and very bold. There were several football matches being played in London on that day, a heavy police presence who were doing a lot of stop and searches.

"These scum can not be dismissed as a bunch of kids or a bunch of middle class UAF students, they were very tough, split into small groups, had spotters and were carrying stanley knifes and screwdrivers. The attack took place on the way from the RV point to the meeting place (they did not attack the meeting itself which was their aim), a couple of people got a good kicking, but the most serious injuries were a broken ankle and a comrade who was taken to hospital after being kicked unconcious. We were very lucky because previous experience shows the weapons they carry were not for show, they have and will use them. There is a strong possibility that they were present at two previous BPP/BM events, the aborted Holborn fundraiser concert for the BNP and the aborted Brick Lane paper sale. Please note both events were aborted because of a strong reaction by their allies in the Police force." (BPP website)

[The BPP are the former Nationalist Alliance and White Nationalist Party, are an old school hardline group of Nazis for whom the BNP is too soft. They are clowns but their violent political ambitions and links to racist violence cannot be ignored or go unopposed]

Bill Stickers

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nd table

Scenes from the Projectile anarchist festival held at the end of May in Newcastle – above, one of the evening gigs at the event; below left, an early arrival in the cinema area; below right, Dave Douglass giving a talk.

left wing doctors and nurses who would say 'this person is suffering from malnutrition because they can't afford enough food', and in some cases people's incomes doubled; she was able to tell us how millions of pounds had been redistributed to working class people by this effort and how successful we could be. It was a real inspiration to us. We're also in touch with Edinburgh, again with our members visiting their meetings – they have a lot to teach us, especially in dealing with bailiffs which is becoming increasingly relevant for LCAP. Also, if anyone wants to start doing similar work we send out delegates to help set up groups, so get in touch if you do.

How do you deal with anti-social elements like drug dealers without going to the police or taking the kind punitive actions the IRA did, and without alienating them?

Nick Praxis: Well my personal take on it is, if someone's a drug dealer get them evicted. Get them out of the community. It's not the role of communities that have very little social capital anyway to absorb all of societies' problems. In the wider situation we tend to talk a lot about union density declining and less workplace organisation, but what isn't mentioned so much is community: community organisation has collapsed. And I think there's been a conscious attempt to run down working class communities. There's a situation in Glasgow where homeless hostels and rehab clinics always get put in the poorest areas, the areas which are least capable of dealing with them. And any time there's an attempt by the council or social services to bring them into richer areas there's outcry over it. That underlines what's been happening really, because in areas where there's more social capital there's still elements of organisation, and in areas where there isn't that organisation we're being shafted. To take a specific example, in the Maryhill area of Glasgow the council decided to demolish a housing scheme there, so they ran the area down for ages, and it got to the point where there were lots of empty houses. And there was a kid there who was hotwiring cars and causing no end of problems, but was actually being protected by the police – because he was linked to drug dealers who were passing the police information. And the council were perfectly happy about this as, because all the tenants were leaving, which facilitated this process of urban clearances. You have to take a firm line on stuff like that, you can't allow our communities to be terrorised. But at the same time you really have to isolate that and stop using state terms like 'anti-social behaviour' where they throw in drug dealers and kids with nothing to do together. You really have to separate these things and deal with them individually – but that requires collective organisation. All these problems require collective organisation, which doesn't exist right now.

How do you keep a community interested and enthused with political activity?